

Message Text

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ACTION OFA-01

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FM AMEMBASSY NASSAU

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 7263

INFO COGD WASHDC

COGD SEVEN MIAMI

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E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: EFIS BF

SUBJ: SPINY LOBSTER

REF: COGDSEVEN 192035Z SEP 75

1. WE HAVE BEEN PROBING INTO INFORMATION THAT LOBSTER IS
PLENTIFUL IN MIAMI, AS WELL AS ALLEGATION THAT SOURCE IS CUBAN
FISHERMEN SELLING TO BAHAMIANS FOR SUBSEQUENT EXPORT TO U.S.

2. WITH REGARD TO FORMER, WE HAVE BEEN TOLD BY CRAWFISH
EXPORTING COMPANY, ONE OF THE FEW BAHAMIAN HOUSES WHICH EXPORT
CRAWFISH, THAT THEIR EXPORTS TO U.S. FOR AUGUST THIS YEAR
TOTAL 35,000 POUNDS AS CONTRASTED TO 25,000 A YEAR AGO. THIS
INCREASE WAS ATTRIBUTED TO "LARGER CATCHES BY THE BAHAMIAN
FISHERMEN." ECHO BAHAMAS LTD. - THE ONLY BAHAMIAN-OWNED
PROCESSING COMPANY ON NEW PROVIDENCE - REPORTED THAT THEIR
AUGUST EXPORTS OF PROCESSED LOBSTER WERE 20,900 POUNDS COMPARED
TO 18,000 POUNDS IN 1974. ECHO REPORTED THAT THE FISHERMEN
WERE SEEING MORE LOBSTER AND ESPECIALLY MORE BEDS OF VERY
SMALL LOBSTER WHICH THEY ASSUME WERE PREVIOUSLY CAUGHT UP
IN TRAPS. ECHO IS VERY CONCERNED ABOUT FLORIDA BUYERS COMING
TO NASSAU AND BUYING GREEN LOBSTER DIRECTLY FROM THE DOCK SINCE
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THIS CUTS ECHO OUT OF ITS PROCESSING BUSINESS. ECHO HAS MADE

A FORMAL COMPLAINT TO THE MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE AND THE EMBASSY MAY HEAR MORE OF THIS THROUGH OFFICIAL CHANNELS. ISLAND FISHERIES (BAHAMIAN FRONTED BUT PURPORTEDLY OWNED BY BEAVER STREET FISHERIES OF JACKSONVILLE, FLORIDA) REPORTS THAT THEY HAVE ACTUALLY PURCHASED LESS LOBSTER THIS YEAR FOR THE SAME REASON. IN AUGUST OF 1974 THEY PROCESSED 32,000 POUNDS WHEREAS THIS AUGUST THEY ONLY PROCESSED 28,000 POUNDS BECAUSE TWO OF THE BOATS THEY USUALLY BUY FROM SOLD DIRECTLY TO FLORIDA BUYERS. THEY ESTIMATE THAT HAD THESE BOATS SOLD TO THEM THEIR TOTAL PROCESSED THIS AUGUST WOULD HAVE BEEN BETWEEN 15,000 AND 22,000 POUNDS MORE THAN IN 1974. AGAIN THE INCREASE IS ATTRIBUTED TO MORE LOBSTERS BEING AVAILABLE.

3. WITH REGARD TO THE ALLEGATION OF PURCHASE FROM CUBANS WE HAVE SO FAR BEEN ABLE TO FIND NO EVIDENCE. CRAWFISH EXPORTING COMPANY IN FACT ASKED EMBASSY OFFICER WHETHER UNDER RECENTLY REVISED U.S. REGULATIONS WHICH PERMIT U.S. SUBSIDIARIES OPERATING OVERSEAS (CRAWFISH EXPORTING COMPANY IS A SUBSIDIARY OF ATLANTA CORP. OF NEW YORK) TO TRADE WITH CUBA WHETHER IT WAS NOW PERMISSIBLE FOR COMPANY TO PURCHASE FROM CUBAN FISHERMEN AND RE-EXPORT INTO U.S. (EMBASSY WOULD APPRECIATE ANSWER TO THIS QUESTION). THE MANAGER STATED THAT THEY HAVE NOT BEEN DOING SO UP UNTIL NOW.

4. WE ALSO CHECKED INTO REPEATED RUMORS THAT U.S. FISHERMEN WOULD BE ISSUED LIMITED NUMBER OF LICENSES FROM BAHAMIAN GOVERNMENT (20 A WEEK FOR FIVE WEEKS WAS INFORMATION WHICH WE RECEIVED). MOST RECENT REPORT OF THIS IS CONTAINED IN REFTEL SUGGESTING ILA IS HOLDING AUCTION FOR DISTRIBUTING LICENSES. SEPARATE CHECKS WITH MINEXTAFF AND WITH MINISTRY AGRICULTURE AND FISHERIES RECEIVED SIMILAR STRONG DENIALS, I.E., THERE IS NOTHING TO THE RUMOR NOR IS SUCH A PROPOSAL UNDER CONSIDERATION FOR THE FUTURE.

5. COMMENT: THE FACT THAT VARIOUS RUMORS ARE FLOATING AROUND SHOULD NOT BE SURPRISING. I DO NOT BELIEVE THE BAHAMIANS ARE PERMITTING CUBANS TO FISH FOR LOBSTERS IN BAHAMIAN WATERS. WHETHER BAHAMIANS ARE PURCHASING CRAWFISH FROM CUBANS ELSEWHERE OR WHETHER THE SO-CALLED "BUY BOATS" ARE PURCHASING FROM CUBAN FISHERMEN I DO NOT KNOW. WITH A VERY FEW INTERMITTENT LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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EXCEPTIONS, HCOAST GUARD HAS REPORTED TO ME THAT CUBAN BOATS ARE NOT REPEAT NOT FISHING ON BAHAMIAN BANKS. HAVING SAID ALL OF THIS, ONE HAS TO CONCEDE THAT THE AMPLE SUPPLY OF LOBSTER IN FLORIDA IS NOT ACCOUNTED FOR. I AM SKEPTICAL THAT THERE HAS BEEN SO LARGE PERCENTAGE INCREASE IN THE BAHAMIAN CATCH AS IMPLIED TO US, ALTHOUGH IT WOULD BE INTERESTING TO KNOW FROM NMFS WHETHER LACK OF U.S. TRAPS WOULD BE LIKELY TO RESULT IN LOBSTERS COMING CLOSER IN SHORE WHERE BAHAMIANS TRADITIONALLY

FISH, A CLAIM WHICH IS BEING MADE IN NASSAU, AND WHETHER THIS
COULD POSSIBLY ACCOUNT FOR SO SUBSTANTIAL AN INCREASE IN THE
CATCH. IN ANY EVENT, WE WILL CONTINUE TO DIG INTO WHATEVER
INFORMATION WE CAN FIND AT THIS END AND WOULD BE INTERESTED
IN INFORMATION OTHERS MAY HAVE.

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